

NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service • 101 S. Main St.
Temple, TX 76501 • Phone: (254) 742-9800 • Web: <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov>

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Contact: Lori Valadez, 254-742-9811

lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov

Mark Habiger, 254-742-9881

mark.habiger@tx.usda.gov

NRCS Will Restore Flood-prone Lands with Economic Recovery Funding

TEMPLE, TEXAS, March 9, 2009 – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide up to \$145 million to eligible landowners nationwide through the floodplain easement component of its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program to restore an estimated 60,000 acres of frequently flooded land to their natural state.

Eligible landowners throughout Texas can sign up for these easements from March 9 – 27, 2009, at their local USDA Service Center. State, county, and city governments are also eligible to participate.

Floodplains are those lands that have been damaged by flooding at least twice in the previous 10 years or at least once in the last 12 months or would be inundated or adversely impacted as a result of a dam breach.

“We will be working with landowners who want to restore floodplains to their natural condition by placing their land into easements,” said Don Gohmert, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “These restored floodplains will generate many public and private benefits, such as increased flood protection, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and a reduced need for future public disaster assistance after flooding.”

The funding, obtained from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, includes both technical and financial assistance to restore the easements. All funds will be spent on

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targeted projects that can be completed with economic stimulus monies. The goal is to have all floodplain easements acquired and restored within 12-18 months. No more than \$30 million can be spent in any one state.

The EWP Program's floodplain easement component allows NRCS to purchase easements on lands damaged by flooding. Benefits include reduced energy consumption when certain agricultural activities and practices are eliminated and increased carbon sequestration as permanent vegetative cover is reestablished.

Interested landowners can contact their local USDA Service Center for more information about the EWP Program's floodplain easements during the signup. For more information, visit the following Web sites: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/ and www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov